

هفت هزار سال هنر در ایران

7000 YEARS OF IRANIAN ART -- IN CLEVELAND

A GUIDE TO THE EXHIBITION
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The present exhibition, 7000 Years of Iranian Art, had its inception as *Sept mille ans d'art en Iran* (7000 Years of Art in Iran) in Paris in 1961. The exhibition was subsequently shown, somewhat modified in content each time, in the Hague, Essen, Zurich, Vienna, and Milan. Each of these exhibitions had in common, as a basis of the material shown, the two important Iranian collections belonging to the Archaeological Museum and Madame L. Foroughi, both of Teheran. The American version of the exhibition, which is circulating in the United States under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution, comprises over 700 objects selected from these same collections.

Prior to its arrival in Cleveland, the exhibition has been shown in four major cities—Washington, Denver, Kansas City, and Houston. Although the collection has remained the same, it has been extremely interesting to observe how, with each showing, the exhibition has taken on a different character as it reflects the different interests and tastes of the host museums and their communities. The exhibition in The Cleveland Museum of Art represents still a fifth variation on the theme. In view of this, the Museum believes that a brief introduction to the Cleveland version of 7000 Years of Iranian Art may prove useful to gallery visitors.

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Although this is the first exhibition of Iranian art to be shown in Cleveland, exhibitions of the art of Iran are by no means new or unusual. The first important exhibition of Iranian art was organized in Philadelphia in 1926. It was followed by the great exhibition at Burlington House in London in 1931 and by one in Leningrad in 1935. A large-scale exhibition was held in New York in 1940, and there was another in Paris and New York in 1948 and 1949. An important Iranian exhibition was organized in Rome in 1957. There is one striking difference between all of these earlier exhibitions and the 1961 Paris *Sept mille ans d'art en Iran* and its successors, including the present American version. In all of the earlier exhibitions there was a great gap between the art of the prehistoric cultures--largely painted pottery--and the highly accomplished and sophisticated art that was produced in Iran during the Achaemenid Empire. To be sure, bronzes from Luristan have been known since the late 1920's, and many were shown in the London exhibition and again in New York in 1940. In the exhibitions after the war in New York, Paris, and later in Rome, objects belonging to this period from scattered excavations and fortuitous finds were included, but their place in the cultural and artistic development of Iran were still very imperfectly understood.

The remarkable aspect of the present exhibition, and its Paris prototype, is the great wealth of material now available to fill this gap. For the first time it has been possible to illustrate the art of Iran from the time of the first Iranian immigrations, toward the end of the second millennium B.C., until its final crystallization as a national art under the patronage of the great Achaemenid emperors, Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, and their successors (559–331 B.C.). It is now clear that it was during this very period that the specifically Iranian character which was to dominate the whole future development of Iranian art was formulated. Indeed it is not until the arrival of the Iranian tribes—who gave their name to the country—that we can accurately speak of Iranian art. It is this important artistic and cultural phenomenon that we have sought to emphasize in the Cleveland version of the exhibition.

In order to help clarify the long and complex historical background to these 7000 years of art in Iran, we have color-keyed the exhibition to correspond to the six principal historical and cultural phases into which the material in the exhibition has been divided. A chronological chart displayed in the gallery, in the same colors (which unfortunately could not be reproduced in the accompanying printed chart), will serve as a reference.

I. Early Painted Pottery Cultures (Chalcolithic Period).

During the early millennia constituting nearly half of the 7000 years represented by the exhibition, the cultural development of Iran was not unlike that which evolved at a similar stage in other parts of the world. Having slowly progressed through the early phases of Paleolithic and Neolithic Cultures—of which only rare remains have been found on the Iranian plateau, the art of

Iran may be said to have had its beginnings in the early Chalcolithic, or Copper, Period. In Iran as elsewhere, prehistoric man first seems to have found a means of expressing his natural longing for beauty in the products of the potter's craft, and it was during the Chalcolithic Period that the art of painted pottery was most highly developed. The art of the many painted pottery cultural phases in chalcolithic Iran is illustrated by only a few examples from some of the most important sites (Cases 1 and 2). The rare stone sculptures of this early period (Case 3) are still not fully understood.

The Bronze Age development of art in Iran is represented by a few, but varied, objects including gold and alabaster and a new type of finely potted and burnished grey ceramic ware (Case 4) excavated at the neighboring sites of Tepe Hissar and Tureng Tepe, near Damghan.

II. The Early Iranian (Grey Ware) Culture.

The upper level at Hissar, level III C, which has been dated approximately between 2200 and 1800 B.C. showed evidence of having been violently destroyed; the inhabitants vanished and the site was never again occupied. However, toward the end of the second millenium, the characteristic burnished grey ware of Hissar began to appear at a number of other Iranian sites, notably level V at Sialk, where it was discovered by French archaeologists in the 1930's, and in a number of more recently discovered sites of which Hasanlu and Marlik are the most important (Case 13). Archaeologists are still divided in their opinions about who the people were who brought the grey ware to Hissar. It seems most probable that they represented but an advance guard of the same Grey Ware Culture represented at Sialk V and VI and at Hasanlu, Marlik, and Khorvin. It is now quite evident that the appearance of grey ware at these sites in northern Iran coincided with the arrival of the first early Iranian tribes—to be precise, the Grey Ware Culture is that of the early Iranians.

As recently as six years ago we had only the most vague and, as we now see, totally incomplete idea of this early Iranian culture which was then based only on the limited finds from the tombs at Sialk. Now with the excavations, since 1959, of Grey Ware levels at Hasanlu, the Amlash area, and Khorvin, and the spectacular discoveries in 1962 at Marlik, together with the quantities of objects from chance finds in these same areas, we are suddenly in possession of a wealth of material from which it is possible for the first time to piece together something of the history and culture of this important and formative period in Iranian development. As an illustration of just how fast our knowledge is growing, it is perhaps worth noting that while the 1961 Paris exhibition included material from Khorvin, Hasanlu, and Amlash, the objects from Marlik which form such an important part of this exhibition still lay hidden beneath the soil!

On the basis of present knowledge, the Grey Ware Culture is believed to have lasted some four hundred years. This period can conveniently be

divided into two phases which may be termed the Early and Late Grey Ware Periods or, alternately, the Proto-and Early Iranian Periods. It seems that the first Iranian bearers of the Grey Ware Culture appeared at Hasanlu toward the end of the second millenium B.C. The early phase of the Grey Ware Period, period V, at Hasanlu (there called the "Button Base" Period) has been dated on the basis of carbon 14 tests to $\pm 1248 - \pm 1073$ or, in round figures, to approximately 1200-1000 B.C. This date corresponds perfectly with the dates which have been assigned on archaeological evidence alone to Necropolis A at Sialk (Sialk V) and to Khorvin. The finds from these two sites correspond very closely with those of Hasanlu V. Hasanlu IV (there called the Grey Ware Period) belongs to the Late Grey Ware Period. Carbon 14 tests for this level have given the dates $\pm 1025 - \pm 807$ or, again in round numbers, approximately 1000-800 B.C. These dates, once again, correspond precisely with those which, based on archaeological evidence alone, were assigned to the related finds from Sialk VI (Necropolis B).

The material so far known from the Marlik excavations indicate that the burials unearthed there took place toward the beginning of the late Grey Ware Period, or about 1000 B.C. according to the estimate of the site's excavator. Only a very few Amlash burials have been scientifically excavated. The bulk of the Amlash material is known only through objects on the market which have come from clandestine or commercial excavations about whose archaeological context absolutely nothing is known. However, from the brief archaeological evidence available, and from the obvious stylistic relationship of the Amlash material with that from Marlik in the same region there seems no question that the Amlash and Marlik material represents a single culture and that the Amlash finds like those of Marlik must belong to the beginning of the Late Grey Ware Period (Cases 11-16).

The dates, twelfth-sixth century, given in the accompanying catalogue for the Amlash objects (nos. 64-128) are obviously far too broad to be assigned to individual objects. Because of the commercial character of the majority of the Amlash finds, a great variety of material from many different periods has come on the market with reported Amlash provenance. Indeed, on this basis the "Amlash Period" might well be dated from 1000 B.C. to 1000 A.D. However, the stylistic relations with the Marlik finds preclude, in our opinion, a date later than the eighth century B.C., and probably point to one closer to the tenth century B.C., for the Amlash objects we have grouped together in this section of the exhibition.)

While it is the grey ware which provides the principal unifying feature of the Early Iranian Culture, it is by no means the only one. One of the important grey ware shapes, the long-spouted pouring vessel (Case 13, nos. 53, 57 and 60), transcends the limitations of this ware and occurs in other ceramic wares of the period, particularly the beautiful painted wares from Necropolis B at Sialk (Case 20). At Hissar, where this shape was already an important one among the grey wares of level III C, it also occurred in alabaster (Case 4), and the same shape was repeated in bronze and silver at Sialk and Luristan

(Case 20). In the now-lost treasure of Astarabad (probably actually from Hissar or Tureng Tepe) this same shape occurred in gold, and a gold and silver long-spouted vessel was found at Marlik. Vessels of this shape occur in quantities in the graves of this period, often several with each burial. There can be little doubt that these vessels, so well suited for pouring, were used particularly for funeral libations and were afterwards placed with the deceased in the grave. Several vessels actually fashioned in the form of a man holding such a long-spouted vessel have been found at Marlik and other sites. A little composite vessel from Hasanlu (Case 20, no. 56a) is another version of this form and demonstrates how this vessel was held and poured.

Theriomorphic ceramics are another characteristic expression of the culture of the Early Iranians. Figurines and vessels fashioned in human and animal form have been found at every site where the Grey Ware Culture has been identified (Cases 10–17). Particularly at Marlik and Amlash, the art of the ceramic sculptor played a dominant role. Sometimes these theriomorphic potteries were pure sculpture, figurines or statuettes, probably intended as idols or votive figures, perhaps sometimes even as toys, but the majority were fashioned as vessels. Since they are always found in graves, like the long-spouted vessels into which they were sometimes transformed, we may assume that they, too, served for funeral libations. Just why this form should have had such an unprecedented popularity in the Marlik-Amlash areas as compared to the moderation with which it was used in other—apparently contemporary—sites is one of the riddles that remains to be solved.

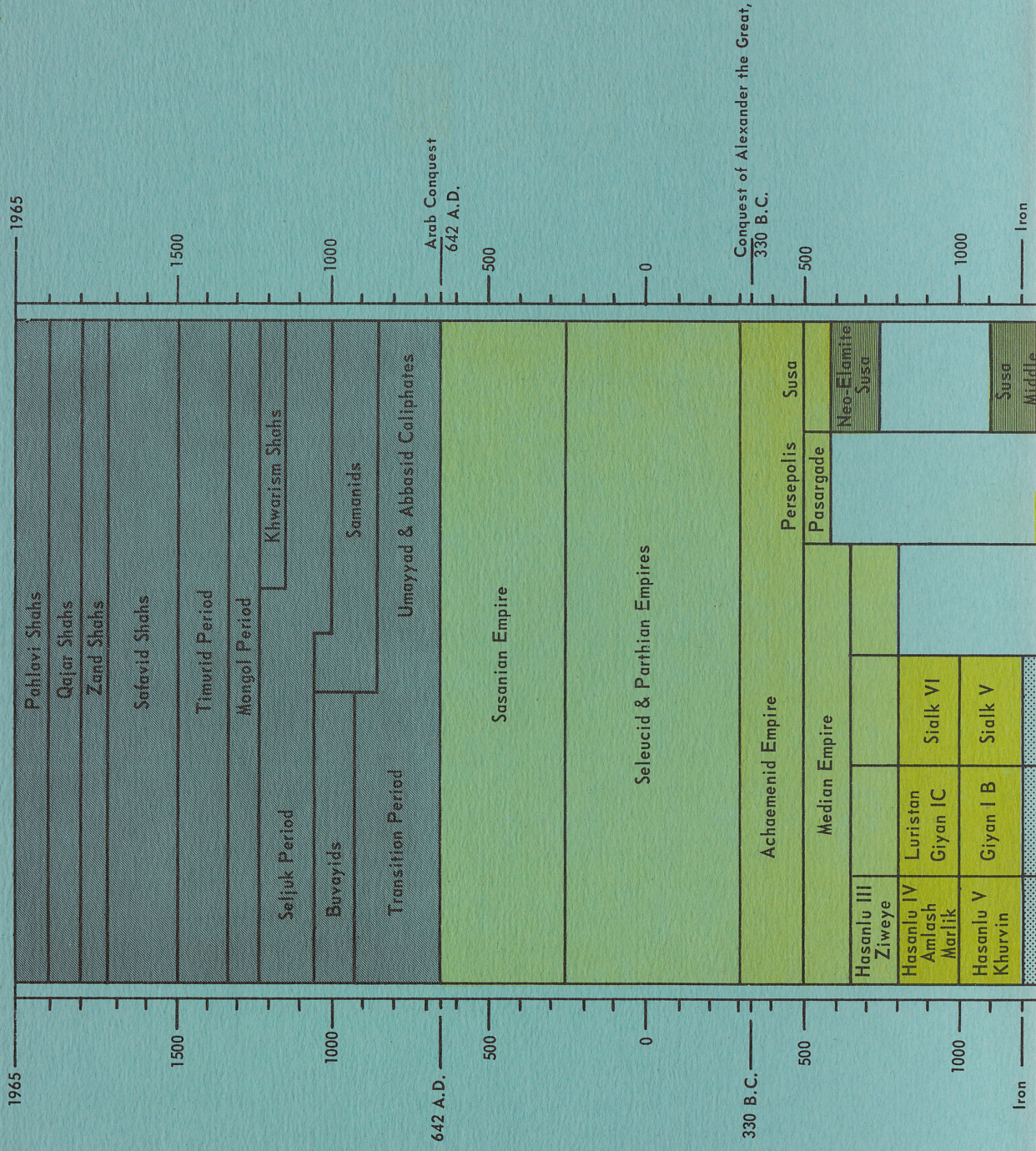
Another characteristic feature of the finds of the Grey Ware sites are small figurines in bronze (Cases 10 and 11). While some undoubtedly served as personal adornments such as pendants, pins, etc. (nos. 115–116), or as adjuncts of other objects (no. 113), and others may have been toys (nos. 40–41), by far the vast majority were amulets or idols which served a religious—votive or apotropaic—purpose. A little figure in a chariot pulled by two dogs (no. 278) is easily recognized as a divinity drawn in a chariot, just as at a much later date Helios, or Apollo, was often represented in his sun chariot by the Greeks. Similarly the little “goddess on horseback” (no. 366) is a familiar Near Eastern divinity; pairs of little figures similarly seated on the backs of animals (nos. 308, 381) may represent a divine couple. Nude female figurines (nos. 29 and 106) offer no problems of interpretation as the Mother Goddess. A warrior (no. 107) and hunter (no. 388) armed with daggers and, in the case of the latter, accompanied by his hunting dogs, more likely served as votive objects than as representations of deities. In all of these small bronzes we can recognize some symbolic or apotropaic quality. The same is true for the many small animals, often provided with loops for suspension so that they could be carried or worn around the neck. In these we find represented the wild animals he feared, such as the leopard (no. 44), or hunted for food, as for example the stag (no. 42), the boar (no. 97) and the mouflon (no. 100). There are the domestic animals that supplied him with food such as the goat (no. 43) and, very frequently, the

humped ox that labored in his fields (nos. 41, 94, 111, 112 and no. 40 complete with plow!). Among them are represented the dog that watched his herds (no.96), his horse (no. 98) and even an animal of his imagination, the unicorn (no.99).

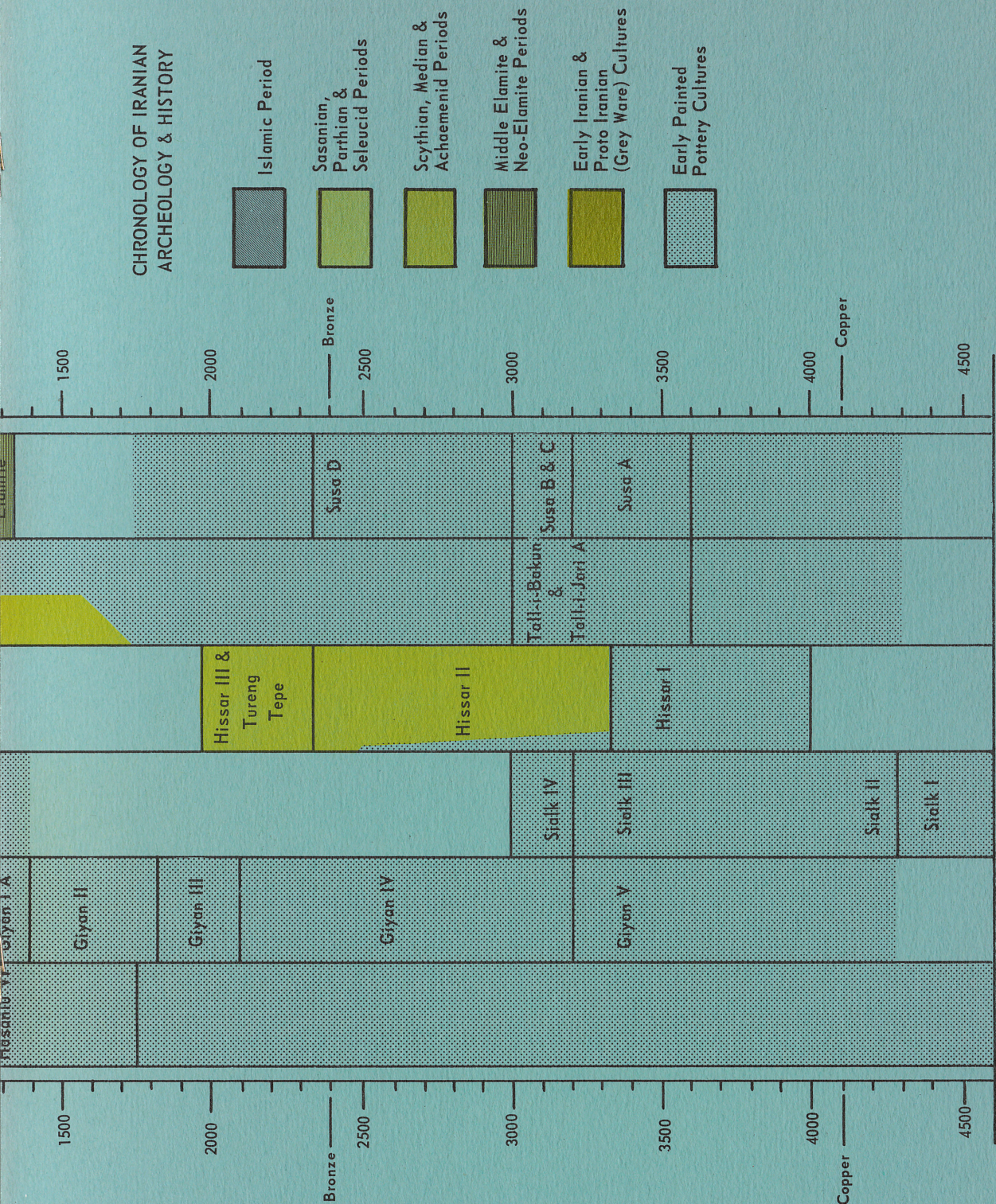
The most spectacular of the objects recovered from the Grey Ware sites are the series of magnificent gold and silver vessels from Hasanlu (Case 6) and Marlik (Cases 7 and 9). The dramatic circumstances surrounding the discovery of the gold bowl in the ruins of the Burned Building at Hasanlu are repeated in the accompanying catalogue (pp. 17-18). The gold vessels from Marlik were all found in tombs, as was the cup found earlier at Kalardasht (Case 9, no. 21). The question of the relationship of these sumptuous gold and silver objects to the rest of the Grey Ware Culture remains one of the most difficult and elusive problems which must be answered before a real understanding of the culture and art of the early Iranians will be possible. This brief exhibition guide is not the place to discuss the many opinions currently held about them nor to attempt to solve these complex problems. However, at least a short statement of our own interpretation of them and their possible solution as expressed in the arrangement of the present exhibition is necessary.

Dr. Porada, the author of the early section of the Exhibition Catalogue, was the first to study and publish the Hasanlu bowl. She assumed a date between 1250 and 1050 B.C. for its manufacture, based largely on her brilliantly conceived iconographic interpretation which led her to conclude that the gold bowl, though found in the ruins of a building of Level IV that had been destroyed at the end of the ninth century B.C., actually had been made during the previous period, i.e. Level V (1250-1050 B.C.). She concluded that the presence of the bowl in the Burned Building was evidently to be explained by its being a valued heirloom. In the present catalogue, Dr. Porada has held to this dating and, on the basis of the relationship of the Marlik gold and silver vessels to the Hasanlu bowl, has assigned the "Marlik Culture" to the same period. However, a comparison of the entire cultural complex of Marlik—as far as it has presently been made known—leads us to the conclusion, as stated above, that the tombs of Marlik must belong, at the earliest, to the beginning of the Late Grey Ware period, or about 1000 B.C. There are too many gold vessels at Marlik—and besides, they were found in tombs—to explain them all as heirlooms. The obvious inference is, then, that the Hasanlu bowl, like those from Marlik, must belong at least to the early part of the level in which it was found. On this basis, the gold bowl might, indeed, have been an heirloom, perhaps almost two hundred years old, at the time the three soldiers made such a valiant effort to save it from the Burning Building sometime just before 800 B.C.

The problem of the provenance of these gold vessels is far more difficult and more critical for our knowledge of early Iranian culture. Until all of the Marlik material—not only that from the official excavations, but a volume of related material which has come on the market presumably from Marlik—has been studied, there is no hope of a definite answer. All that can be said on the basis of the information presently at hand is that stylistically and icono-



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graphically the majority of the Marlik gold and silver vessels and the Hasanlu bowl do not appear to be of local manufacture. There are many stylistic and iconographic features which point to Mesopotamia, to Babylonian and Assyrian art; there are many elements to be compared with objects from Luristan; and, perhaps even more significantly, there is much to remind us of the art of Elam. On the gold beaker from Gilan (Case 9, no. 26), the lower frieze of kneeling deities holding vases from which water flows into another vase from which springs a plant—the tree of life, is so close in iconography and style to the famous stele in the Louvre of Untash Huban, king of Elam, ca. 1265-1245 B.C., as to strongly suggest that it is to Elam that we will have to look for the workshops which produced the gold and silver vessels of Marlik, Hasanlu, and Kalardasht.

Bronzes from Luristan.

Of all the riddles presented by the art objects which have come from the soil of Iran, that concerning the date and cultural origin of the Luristan bronzes is the most difficult and has called forth the most widely divergent opinions. In spite of the literally thousands of bronzes from Luristan now known, in public and private collections and on the art market, we are actually only very little closer today to the solution of this problem than we were thirty or thirty-five years ago. Something of the reigning confusion is reflected in the catalogue of the present exhibition, where Dr. Porada vacillates between tenth-ninth and ninth-seventh centuries in the Introduction (p. 24) and tenth-eighth centuries in the section heading (p. 66), whereas the individual catalogue entries, taken from Dr. Ghirshman's Paris Exhibition Catalogue, consistently give the date eighth-seventh century for all (nos. 146-416) but the few pieces dated otherwise by inscriptions (nos. 129-145). Without believing that we have solved the Luristan riddle, we have attempted in our organization of the present exhibition to improve somewhat on this state of affairs.

The problems surrounding the bronzes from Luristan are complicated by the fact that none have come from controlled archaeological excavations, but rather all are the result of chance or clandestine finds, and they are without any archaeological information whatsoever. We have no clues to either the geographical or stratigraphical distribution of the finds. Indeed, we have nothing but the tradition of the market to attach the vast majority of Luristan bronzes to that region. We may be sure, moreover, that because of the fame of Luristan as a source of bronzes that the appellation "Luristan" has been applied to many bronzes not actually found there. The word Luristan has come to be used synonymously for Iranian bronzes in somewhat the same way that Kodak has become a synonym for camera, and just as inaccurately. Before any headway can be made in the study of the so called Luristan bronzes, these facts must be recognized.

First of all it is necessary to make a clear distinction between "bronzes from Luristan" and "Luristan bronzes." The former may apply accurately to

any bronze which was found in Luristan; it need not have been made there. It may have been imported into the area through trade, as tribute or booty, or it may have been left by invading armies. The latter term, on the other hand, can only accurately be applied to some within these bronzes from Luristan which exhibit a particular style known only on bronzes from this area. Once we have succeeded in isolating the Luristan bronzes from the other bronzes from Luristan and those which have been inaccurately reported to be from that area, we will be well on the way toward a solution of the Luristan problem.

In arranging the Cleveland version of the exhibition we have departed widely from the catalogue arrangement and its consistent dating of all the objects regardless of style, and we have attempted to sort out this varied collection into at least the most obvious groups. On the basis of inscriptions and style we have separated one group clearly representing Mesopotamian imports (Case 21). Another group can be assigned on the same basis to Elam (Case 5). Others apparently more closely related to the small bronzes of Marlik and Amlash (many of them probably actually originating in this area and erroneously attributed to Luristan) have been brought together in Case 11. Some, particularly a group of phalera and bowls which are related to the art of the Median and Achaemenian Periods, have been placed in that context (Case 35); a mirror with a handle in the form of a little nude female of Hellenistic style must belong to the Parthian Period (Case 40, no. 413). The remaining bronzes from Luristan are in Cases 18-27.

Having partially isolated, at least, the Luristan bronzes, there remains the problem of their date and their relationship to the other cultures of early Iran. The most characteristic objects among the Luristan bronzes are the elaborate horse bits with psalia in the form of animals and monsters, often with humans or deities in combat with them (Case 23). As far as is known from the meager information available, these bits have all come from tombs widely scattered over the Luristan area. In the same tombs were found other horse trappings, particularly harness rings, and another typically Luristan object, the votive pin (Cases 22 and 25). It is clear from their size and weight (no. 149 weights over $4\frac{1}{4}$ pounds) that these bits could never have actually been worn by horses, and they never show signs of wear that would indicate that they had been. The inference is that they had been placed in the tombs in lieu of the horse that in an earlier time may have been buried with his master. It is important to emphasize that none of these typically Luristan objects have been found at any of the Grey Ware sites yet excavated, nor does the style which characterizes them occur on objects of the Grey Ware Culture. As with the gold and silver vessels from Marlik, with which some Luristan bronzes have much in common, the style and iconography of the Luristan bronzes point to a closer association with Mesopotamia and Elam to the south and west than with their Iranian neighbors living to the north east. Certainly there are Iranian elements, particularly those of the later Medes and Persians, to be recognized in the Luristan bronzes, and there can be no doubt that there was

an exchange of influences between the peoples of Luristan and the early Iranians. Indeed, the art of Luristan undoubtedly influenced the stylistic development of Iranian art, and it in turn influenced the course of development of the art of Luristan, so much so, that during the Median and Persian periods the art of Luristan and that of the Iranians evidently evolved into a single Iranian style.

On the basis of only the objects in this exhibition it is impossible to attempt to establish a chronological sequence for the Luristan bronzes. But it will be apparent to any one examining the group of horse bits (Case 23), for example, or the votive pins (Cases 22 and 25), that while related these objects cannot all belong to a single period but must represent a considerable evolution and that they may well cover the period represented by the lower date suggested by Dr. Porada, i.e. tenth century and the upper date, the seventh century, suggested by Dr. Ghirshman. Judging by the number of inscribed bronzes found in the same region, perhaps in some cases even from the same tombs, which have names of Babylonian, Kassite, and Elamite kings (Cases 5 and 21) we may well be justified in pushing the lower date back perhaps another two hundred years. The people who made the Luristan bronzes were, it would seem, the descendents of the Kassites, the Lullubi, the Guti, and the Elamites who we know, from Mesopotamian sources, had dominated this area at various times. Undoubtedly, they were the ancestors, in turn, of the very people, the Lurs, who still inhabit the region today.

III. Elam.

Located outside the Iranian plateau, in the plain of the fertile crescent, and more closely allied physically, historically, and culturally with Mesopotamia than with the rest of Iran, lay the land of Elam, which was centered on the important city of Susa. The great mound of Susa, with strata dating from prehistoric through Islamic times, has been the object of archaeological excavations by the French Mission to Iran since the end of the last century. Quantities of important objects, particularly from the early phases of its history, were taken to Paris to enrich the collections of the Louvre. Unfortunately, due to the unscientific methods of the early excavators, relatively little archaeological data were preserved, and, undoubtedly, many important strata, particularly of later periods, were destroyed in the quest for ancient objects of art.

It is to be regretted that the art of Elam is so poorly represented in the present exhibition. The art of the prehistoric periods is illustrated by two examples of the most beautiful of the painted pottery wares from Susa (Case 1).

Although the importance of Susa and the great Middle Elamite empire which it dominated during the latter part of the second millenium is well known, very little is actually known of Elamite art of the period. When the results of the

recent excavations of the great Ziggurat complex at Tchoga Zambil, near Susa, are fully published we should know much more. Even now, however, it is clear that Elam served as a bridge between the cultures of the Mesopotamian plain and that of the Iranian highlands and was an important highway by which Mesopotamian thought and art made their way to Iran. It is in Elamite art of this period that we may find the source of the style and iconography of the Hasanlu and Marlik gold and silver vessels. The art of Luristan was undoubtedly strongly influenced by it.

Only one object actually excavated at Susa from this period is included in the exhibition (Case 5, no. 63). However, the art of this and the later Neo-Elamite Period is illustrated by a number of small objects supposedly found in Luristan but which can be ascribed to Elam either on the basis of style or of inscriptions with the name of Elamite kings and officials (Case 5). The extremely high degree of artistic development of the art of the Middle Elamite Period is illustrated by a little votive figure (no. 240) representing the great Mother Goddess, upon whose head is poised an ibex, the traditional Near Eastern animal symbol of fertility. Though actually small in scale, this little sculpture has a truly monumental character and is of the highest sculptural quality.

IV. Scythian, Median and Achaemenid periods.

With the arrival of the Scyths, the Medes and the Persians, who formed the last great wave of the Iranian migrations, we begin to be on firmer historical ground. The Medes and the Persians are first mentioned in the Annals of Shalmaneser III in the 9th century B.C. The Medes settled in the northwest and established a capital at Ecbatana (modern Hamadan). They rapidly became the dominant political force in Iran and by 612 B.C., allied with Babylonia, they sacked Nineveh and put an end to the Assyrian empire to which, to a large extent, they became heirs.

The political ascendancy of the Medes was short lived, however, their empire was soon wrested from them by the Persians who had pushed on south and settled in the plain of Fars, or Pars (from which Parsis, Persia etc.). The ruling dynasty of the Persians--known under the dynastic name, Achaemenians or Achaemenids--was founded by Cyrus the Great in 559 B.C. Under the Achaemenid kings, Persia became the center of the greatest empire the world had yet known; her political power extended from India on the one hand to Greece and Egypt on the other. Cyrus built his capital at Pasargadae, in the plain of Fars, but as the empire expanded under his successors new capitals were built at Susa, Persepolis and Babylon and Hamadan, the former Median capital, served as a summer residence. Of all these great cities only the ruins of Persepolis remain to give us some idea of their grandeur. Besides being our chief source for the architecture of the Achaemenid period, Persepolis was for a long time almost our only visual source concerning the other arts of the

period. In the reliefs are depicted many objects of decorative art--furniture, gold and silver vessels, jewelry, costume, textiles, arms and armour and horse trappings--many of which are still otherwise unknown.

The first important group of Achaemenid objects to come to light was the famous Oxus treasure, now in the British Museum, discovered in Central Asia in 1879. It was possible to identify many of the objects of this treasure as Achaemenid on the basis of stylistic comparison with the Persepolis reliefs. Since that time, as the soil of Iran has slowly yielded up its treasures, a relatively large corpus of Achaemenid art has become known. From Persepolis itself, which was evidently thoroughly sacked and pillaged before it was burned, have come relatively few valuable objects of art. From the objects that were recovered from the excavations there, three of the finest are in the exhibition (Cases 32 and 33). There is the beautiful little head of a prince (no. 443) and the forepart of a superb lion (no. 458), both carved in blue glass paste, and a pair of bronze horses (no. 463).

The greatest single find of Achaemenid art yet to come to light is the gold treasure of Hamadan which was accidentally discovered only very recently. The treasure included a whole series of gold and silver vessels and jewelry, among which were several magnificent gold and silver bowls and plates inscribed with the names of Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes. Unfortunately, only one piece from this great treasure, the gold bowl of Xerxes (Case 32, no. 448), is included in the present exhibition. A number of other gold and silver objects also said to have come from Hamadan, some perhaps actually from this treasure, are in the exhibition (Case 31 and 32).

The now abundant corpus of Achaemenid art clearly reveals the superb technical and aesthetic achievements of the time. It is especially to be regretted that the limitations of the present exhibition do not adequately illustrate the full scope and quality of this, unquestionably the greatest period of Iran's artistic achievement. The most striking feature of Achaemenid art is the fact that it seemed to have suddenly sprung into being without having had any previous period of development. A certain dependence on Assyrian, and to a degree on Hellenic art had always been recognized. But Achaemenid art showed a well developed style of its own; one that could not easily be explained as direct borrowing. In its peculiar and elegant stylization it went far beyond anything known in Greek and Assyrian art, but until very recently no forerunners of the Achaemenid style had come to light.

Actually it was not until 1947 that the accidental discovery of a rich hoard of objects near the village of Ziweye in Kurdistan provided us with an important group of material which can be assigned to the Median period. Several pieces from this treasure are in the present exhibition (Case 28). Many of the objects (here see especially nos. 427, 428 and 429) display a curious variety of styles, the principal elements of which are Assyrian, Urartean and Scythian and scholars have been divided in opinion concerning their rightful attribution. Suffice it to say that while all of these styles are represented, they only

reflect the many varied cultural influences which pervaded northern Iran at this time. On the whole, the main body of the Ziweye treasure appears to have been made locally over a short period of time--evidently in the late seventh century B.C. Since 1947 commercial excavations at Ziweye and near by have revealed a whole host of other objects--gold, silver, bronzes and ceramics (some pieces are in this exhibition, Case 30)--which obviously belong to the same period. By comparison it is now also possible to recognize as Median a number of objects from the Hamadan treasure (Case 31).

Now, with the more recent discoveries of sites of the Grey Ware Period, we are able for the first time to trace the art of the early Iranians in an unbroken sequence from the time of their first appearance at Hissar, later at Sialk, Khorvin, Marlik, and Hasanlu, through the Median Period and into the Achaemenid Period. It is clear now that the art of Achaemenid Iran represents but the crystalization of all the diverse elements present in the art of the earlier periods and the emergence of a fully developed Iranian art.

V. Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods.

The destruction of the Achaemenid empire by the conquest of Alexander the Great in 331 B.C., brought about the beginning of a new era in the art of Iran. In the wake of Alexander's conquest followed a long period, first under the Seleucids and then under the Parthians, in which the art--and, of course, the whole culture of Iran--became strongly Hellenized. Unfortunately, very little has survived, or at least has as yet become known, of the art of this long and troubled period. Of the few objects which represent this period in the exhibition (Cases 37 and 40), the most important and the finest are the two sculptures (nos. 468-469) which were found many years ago in the remains of a Parthian temple at Shami.

Under the Parthians, the great empire of the Achaemenids was allowed to fall apart into a number of small feudal kingdoms, which did little more than acknowledge allegiance and pay their annual tribute to the Parthian rulers. Living in Fars, with their capital at Istakre, near Persepolis, were the rulers of one of these petty kingdoms who traced their ancestry back to the Achaemenids. Finally, under Ardashir they revolted against the Parthians and overthrew them in 226 A.D. Ardashir and his successors immediately set about the restoration of the Iranian empire. In its greatest period the empire of the Sasanians--as their dynastic name was known--very nearly equalled that of their Achaemenid predecessors. The Sasanian kings also made a conscious attempt to bring about the revival of ancient Iranian culture; they sought to replace with Iranian traditions the many foreign customs and ideas which had been brought by the Greeks.

The art that emerged during the Sasanian period marked another great step in the evolution of the art of Iran. Sasanian art developed a character of its own--Iranian in form, Iranian in content--but over it all lies the long shadow cast by five hundred years of Hellenistic influence. There are such characteristic Iranian elements as the predominance of animal motives, the stylization

of forms and the interest in decorative detail but there are classical survivals, particularly the naturalistic representation of the movement of the body and the folds of garments, but under the Sasanians even these take on a static, almost decorative, treatment which is non-Greek.

The most important documents of Sasanian art are the series of great rock reliefs carved on the mountain sides near Persepolis, at Bishapur, and at several other sites in Iran (see the photo murals in this section of the gallery). The Sasanian kings had themselves portrayed in these reliefs participating in important ceremonial acts, in combat or at the hunt. After the reliefs, our main source of information concerning Sasanian art is a series of silver plates decorated with scenes of Sasanian kings very similar in subject and style to those on the rock reliefs. Until very recently most of the known examples were in the Hermitage Museum in Russia where they have been assembled from accidental finds by peasants working in the fields. The plates had evidently been exported to Russia long ago as important gifts or objects of trade. Only recently have an important number of such silver vessels been found in Iran itself; there, also, as the result of accidental finds by peasants. Some from the Teheran Museum and Mrs. Foroughi's collection are in the exhibition (Cases 38 and 39). A number of years ago, at Sari, just south of the Caspian, the beautiful plate in the Teheran Museum (Case 38, no. 484) was found. With it, we are told, was found an alabaster plaque--almost identical in subject and style--recently acquired by the Cleveland Museum. Because of the unprecedented opportunity the presence of the Teheran plate in Cleveland provides for studying the two side by side, we have included the Cleveland plaque in the exhibition (Case 38).

VI. The Islamic Period.

The Sasanian Period came to an end when the followers of Mohammad conquered Iran in the name of the religion Islam in 642 A.D. This date marks the beginning of the final--and still continuing--great period of Iranian culture and art. The history and art of Iran in this period are well documented and are adequately covered in the accompanying catalogue; there is no need to reiterate here. In all essentials we have followed the attributions and dating given in the accompanying catalogue; it is only necessary to point out that in arranging the gallery we have thought it better, because of the uneven representation of the various media in the exhibition, to assemble the objects by materials. We have cut across the historical sequence followed by the catalogue and have brought the various media together so that--as far as they are represented--one can follow the stylistic evolution within each of the fields.

As a reminder of the continuity of Iranian art we have placed together in Case 55 a ceramic jug of the Grey Ware Culture from Amlash, from approximately 1000 B.C. and another strikingly similar one made more than 2000 years later in the Seljuk period in Gurgan.